

VZCZCXRO8099
PP RUEHLA
DE RUEHMD #2295/01 3551619
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 211619Z DEC 07
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3996
INFO RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 6072
RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA PRIORITY 3212
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0396

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MADRID 002295

SIPDIS

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NEA/PI FOR KENNETH GROSS, CATHERINE BOURGEOIS, ELIZABETH
SULLIVAN, BLAKE THORKELSON
NEA/MAG FOR RANDALL KAAILAU
IO/UNP FOR ANNELIESE REINEMEYER
USUN FOR LAURIE SHESTACK
S/P FOR KAREN VOLKER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [SOCI](#) [KMPI](#) [UN](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: SPAIN WOULD WELCOME MEPI PROJECT UNDER AOC AUSPICES

REF: A. S-MORATINOS LETTER - FEBRUARY 14 2006

[1](#)B. MADRID 2046

[1](#)C. USUN 851

[1](#)D. USUN 496

[1](#)E. 2006 ISTANBUL 2084

[1](#)1. SUMMARY; Polcouns met December 19 with Spanish Deputy Political Director Felix Costales to discuss the possible association of MEPI's Civic Education Partnership Initiative (CEPI) with the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) as a means to fulfill the Secretary's commitment to contribute to the AoC. Costales welcomed the initiative and noted that it clearly falls within the parameters of the AoC's stated goals and priorities. He added that official approval would have to be coordinated with AoC High Representative Jorge Sampaio, but he did not anticipate this would be a problem and undertook to discuss it with Sampaio. Polcouns asked whether the project's association with the AoC would entail any administrative burden - monitoring, follow up, publicity, etc. Costales replied that a joint press release and a future report on the results of the project would likely be the extent of the administrative burden, as the AoC does not aspire to be a major grant-making organization. He underscored that the AoC's primary purpose will not be the development, funding and implementation of projects; rather, the AoC wants to lend its name, political cachet, and best practices to groups and projects in its field of view, as well as serving as a networking and coordination "clearinghouse." Costales also urged the U.S. to do more than re-brand a MEPI project with an AoC imprimatur, and he offered three possible projects where a U.S. contribution could be helpful. He acknowledged that no such contribution could reasonably be expected before the January 15-16 First Forum of the Alliance of Civilizations in Madrid, and he said there would be plenty of time after the forum for consideration of these proposals. Costales encouraged the U.S. to attend the Forum despite our non-membership in the Group of Friends. END SUMMARY.

BACKGROUND

[1](#)2. Polcouns called on Spanish Deputy Political Director Felix Costales December 19 to propose a means of fulfilling Secretary Rice's commitment to contribute to the Alliance of

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Civilizations, a UN institution proposed, developed and largely funded by Spain. Secretary Rice committed to a contribution in a February 2006 letter to Foreign Minister

Moratinos, but asked Moratinos to help identify a concrete project to which the U.S. could make a contribution. In coordination with EUR, NEA/PI identified USD 100,000 in October 2005 that could be directed toward an eventual AoC contribution, provided it could be earmarked for a specific project whose goals corresponded with those of MEPI. Almost two years later, the Alliance has become a full-fledged UN institution with a High Representative of the Secretary General, former Portuguese PM Jorge Sampaio, and a Group of Friends of more than 70 nations. However, neither the AoC nor the Spanish have proposed a specific project for U.S. attention. Spanish interlocutors have consistently shown less interest in the size and substance of a U.S. contribution than in the aesthetic significance of USG involvement in the AoC as an institution. During A/S Fried's October visit to Madrid, GOS interlocutors emphasized the importance of a U.S. contribution prior to the AoC's First Forum January 15-16 in Madrid.

MADRID ACTION

¶3. In consultation with EUR and IO, Embassy Madrid reached out again to NEA/PI in October 2007 seeking a project that could fulfill the Secretary's commitment. NEA/PI proposed the Civic Education Partnership Initiative (CEPI), a joint effort among Bowling Green State University, Hassan II University, the Moroccan Center for Civic Education, and the U.S. Center for Civic Education. Starting in Morocco, CEPI proposes to introduce a Civic Education into North African schools from K-12. The project would involve training of teachers and administrators, as well as development of new education materials and procedures compatible with the unique educational experience in North Africa. We understand NEA/PI is willing to associate the project with the AoC, provided it does not entail undue administrative/accountability burdens,

MADRID 00002295 002 OF 002

and is prepared to proceed with the USD 1.2 million initiative either way.

SPANISH RESPONSE

¶4. Costales welcomed the project and said it clearly fell within the bounds of AoC objectives. If the USG was prepared to fund the project, he did not see any reason why it could not be done under the AoC umbrella. On administrative burdens, Costales agreed that a joint press release and a future report on the project's effectiveness would likely be the limit of AoC requirement, but he cautioned that he could not speak for High Representative Sampaio.

¶5. Costales then asked the U.S. to consider providing greater political support for the AoC. He noted that three funds would be announced at the First Forum of the AoC in Madrid January 15-16. The first, a "Youth Solidarity Fund" would provide small quantities of seed money (app. USD 1,000) for youth groups to conduct projects in keeping with AoC goals. The second was a media fund that would provide grants to tolerant media sources in nations where media freedom and/or objectivity was a concern. The AoC envisioned this fund receiving mainly private contributions but would allow matching contributions from States. Finally, a third fund would seek to provide employment for youths in the Middle East. Costales emphasized that a USG contribution to any of these funds would represent a greater commitment by the USG to the institution, creating a more tangible link than simply associating a project designed, funded, and implemented by the U.S. with the AoC.

¶6. Polcouns stated U.S. willingness to look at those funds once greater detail was available, but underscored that the immediate goal was for the U.S. to fulfill its commitment to the AoC and to the GOS prior to the First Forum. Costales agreed, and said there would be time after the Forum for the

U.S. to consider those projects.

[¶](#)7. We will be in contact with EUR/WE and NEA/PI to close the loop and prepare a draft press release to share with the GOS and AoC with a view toward an announcement prior to the January 15 Forum.
AGUIRRE